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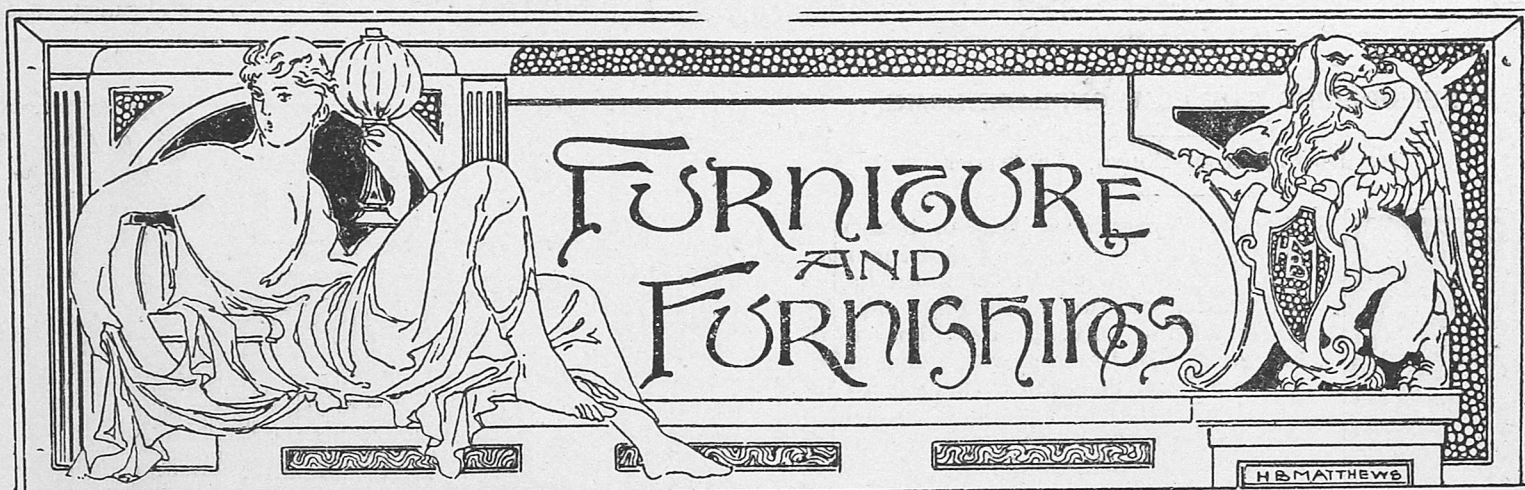
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## SILVER TABLES.



SILVER TABLES, as they are called, take their name not from the material of which they are made, but from the pretty toys in the precious metals that are displayed upon them. In themselves they are very inexpensive affairs, generally small and low, sometimes made of inlaid oak or mahogany, and often constructed of common pine, with plush or tapestry covering. Economical housewives with ambitious proclivities sometimes utilize old nursery tables or cut the legs of bedside stands, as they were once called, to the proper height, and then paint and gild them or cover them in some pretty stuff, and lay upon them all the rare and costly "bits" that they have collected in foreign travel or inherited from grandmothers and aunts.

The silver table, of course, must always occupy a prominent place in the drawing-room or boudoir, and no rich woman with artistic or dainty tastes would consider her house furnished without it. There may even be two or more of them if the collection of pretty things outruns the space allotted to them, although, to avoid monotony in the furnishing of a room, it is better to go to the expense of an oblong table in buhl or marqueterie, with a glass top in which to display miniatures, snuff-boxes and other valuable antiques in gold or silver. They are thus protected from damage by dust or smoke, and also cease to be a temptation to kleptomaniacs, who, sad to say, are frequently to be met in society's most refined circles.

The first and most important acquisition toward a really handsome table is a silver lamp, which should be a genuine antique in old Roman or Grecian form; but, as these are difficult to find and necessarily expensive, an imitation one may be equally effective when lighted at night. This lamp, with a colored shade, throws a glow over the curios beneath it which adds greatly to their beauty. Candlesticks, except when very little, and suited rather to a doll house, are excluded from companionship with the small and dainty bits. Photograph frames in rich repoussé or elaborately carved silver are, however, admissible, but they must not be large, and the pictures inclosed must be very beautiful. In the holiday season men who wish to compliment a lady by sending something less perishable than flowers frequently inclose "A Happy New Year" or "Merry Christmas" in a small and exquisitely carved silver frame with designs of roses, lilies or violets. This, of course, is a most acceptable gift—it makes such a showy addition to the silver table. Next in importance to the lamps and the frames are spoons of every conceivable shape and ornamented in a thousand different ways, which may be collected in foreign travel, or even on a tour in one's own country. On the convex side of the souvenir spoon may be seen always a delicate engraving of some prominent point or building in the district from which it came. The Strasburg Cathedral, in spite of its enormous size, is distinctly reproduced, with all its towers, steeples, carvings and gargoyles, on the back of a very small spoon, and a lady who recently returned from abroad with an immense collection of silver table ornaments, had among them a very minute spoon with the Falls of the Rhine on the inside of its bowl, and an exquisite little etching of the castle of Ehren-

breitstein on another. These souvenirs are not only valuable to the owner from her own associations with them, but they half an inexhaustible topic of conversation during that bad form hour before dinner when a belated guest is waited for, or a dilatory cook is behindhand with the soup.

As for the other articles that go to make up a lady's collection of this *fin de siècle* fad, their name is legion. Sofas, chairs and minute mirrors are often grouped together in one corner of the table, while windmills spread their arms over an Empire clock about half an inch high, which sometimes has its works inside and goes after a fashion of its own. Richly carved and embossed boxes, sometimes large enough to hold cigarettes and sometimes only big enough for bonbons or crystallized leaves of roses and violets, have a corner of their own, while a Russian sleigh stands near, with tassels and lap robes, and what looks like a Russian prince holding reins so fine as to be barely discernible with the naked eye, over prancing steeds not much larger than mosquitoes.

But among the most highly prized, because the rarest and most difficult to obtain of all the silver toys, are those that come from India. Men and women who go down to the sea in yachts and cruise along the shores of the Indian Ocean bring back with them a collection of heathen idols, boats, lamps, and statuettes of girls and women, almost always without shape or comeliness, and enveloped in long veils from head to foot. Anklets of solid silver, worn by Indian maidens and never removed during the life of the wearer, are valuable from their rarity and the weight of silver they contain. Nose and ear rings, too, are greatly in request, but these articles are for actual use and not intended for toys; consequently, they are rather large for a small silver table, but no woman would refuse them if they were given as a present.

Chinese carvings are so generally in ivory—and very exquisite they are—that but few additions to a lady's store of silver come from there, and the Turkish bazars at Constantinople are so loaded with rich stuffs, heavy gold and silver embroidery, pipes and meerschaums, that it is only occasionally a very exquisite piece of silver or gold carving can be found there. Venice, however, and all northern Italy furnish an inexhaustible store of filigree silver, which is generally manufactured into personal or table ornaments, the necklaces, tiaras and bracelets of which are hideously unbecoming, and the table-furnishings taking the form of goblets, tankards and flower-vases, which, except when reproduced in miniature, are of no use for drawing-room decoration. We have seen, however, a wonderful piece of filigree work in the shape of a long pipe, of which the tortoise-shell foundation was so thickly studded with stars, crescents, roses, palm trees and other devices that the tortoise-shell could not be detected at all. The mouthpiece of this unique production was of amber, and the bowl of the heaviest and richest silver, carved in arabesques. The lady who was the fortunate possessor of this valuable curio did not display it among cheaper things on her silver table, but had a stand of tortoise-shell, with a top of crimson velvet, constructed for it to rest upon.

Smoking is so almost universal now among the ladies in the smart sets of London, Paris and our own city that silver and gold cigarette-cases and match-boxes are almost indispensable for their use. Silver was fine enough for women five years ago, but gold cigarette-cases are now in very general use, and are always within the reach of the fair smoker's hand, either in library or drawing-room.